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SUBJECT: FARC AND ELN ANNOUNCE NON-AGGRESSION PACT

CLASSIFIED BY: Mark Wells, Political Counselor, Department of State,  
Political Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

SUMMARY

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11. (C) The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) issued a joint communique in mid-December announcing non-aggression pact between the two organizations. Minister of Defense Gabriel Silva said that the pact shows the organizations are in a weakened state and are trying to gain "political oxygen." A U.S. scholar working on the peace process told us the deal may have been brokered in Venezuela, and that the FARC and ELN found it politically expedient to rally together against the U.S.-Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA). Still, it is unlikely that the FARC and ELN will cooperate on an operational level. Similar non-aggression pacts in the past have been short-lived as the two organizations have clashed for control of the lucrative drug trade, particularly along the borders with Venezuela and Ecuador. End summary.

12. (U) The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) issued a joint communique in mid-December announcing a pact of non-aggression between the two organizations. The communique was issued by the FARC Secretariat and ELN Central Command (COCE) and stated that, effectively immediately, they would: 1) stop fighting each other; 2) not collaborate with the enemy; 3) respect the civilian population and social organizations; and 4) utilize respectful language with each other. In an attempt to capitalize on regional discontent surrounding the DCA, the communique identified U.S. "imperialism" and Colombian "lackeys" as the common enemy and charged that the DCA had converted Colombia into a "giant military base."

DEFENSE MINISTRY REACTS

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13. (U) In a December 20 article in leading daily "El Tiempo," Colombian Minister of Defense Gabriel Silva said that the communique underscores the weakness of the FARC and ELN, which historically have had clashing ideologies. Silva noted that both

are in a weakened state and are trying to stave off the final democratic security offensive. He observed that they want to discuss a fictitious peace process and now even unification in an attempt to obtain "political oxygen" and to prove they are still relevant.

14. (C) Aldo Civico (protect), from Columbia University's Center for International Conflict Resolution, told us on December 19 that the pact may have been brokered in Venezuela between FARC leader Ivan Marquez and members of the ELN Central Command (COCE). Civico noted that church-sponsored peace forums had taken place in December in Arauca department, where the in-fighting has been fiercest, and that local commanders of both the ELN and FARC attended and could have discussed implementation of the pact there. He observed that the communique was largely symbolic and not operational in nature, and that the two organizations found it politically expedient to rally against the DCA. His analysis of the communique and other FARC communications led him to conclude that FARC leader alias Alfonso Cano seemed to be controlling the FARC's message and that FARC military leader alias Mono Jojoy has been silent.

COMMENT

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15. (C) The communique is a non-aggression pact and does not indicate that the FARC and ELN plan to join forces operationally. This is not the first time that the FARC and ELN have discussed such pacts -- as recently as April 2009 the ELN issued a communique asking the FARC to halt all confrontations with the ELN -- but such arrangements have been short-lived. There were reports earlier this year that some Colombian military commanders may have colluded with the ELN to fight the FARC in Arauca. The announcement likely comes as the FARC Secretariat and the ELN COCE realize that in-fighting in Arauca and Narino departments is taking its toll. The communique also represents an effort to capitalize politically on dissent over the DCA. Still, given the command and control of both the FARC and ELN is fractured, it is not likely that the pact will hold up for long at lower levels as the FARC and ELN jockey for control over lucrative drug trafficking routes. End comment.

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